



# Your City GOVERNMENT

## *A Summary of the City of San Antonio's Municipal Government*

*Your municipal government is a sophisticated organization. Important decisions are made and tax dollars are spent every day on services that touch you. This guide summarizes the history of San Antonio's municipal government, how it is organized today, how basic services are supported, and how you can play an active role in your government. This is Your City Government.*

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT: ITS PAST AND PRESENT

The city of San Antonio today has evolved from a small Indian village nestled along the banks of a quiet, meandering river into a major metropolitan center that thrives on its culture and history. Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived at the village in 1691 on the feast day of St. Anthony and renamed it San Antonio de Padua. The missionaries set out to convert the native Americans to Christianity and introduce them to Spanish society.

The first of the five missions, the Alamo, was built in 1718 by the Spanish but it would also serve as a military post as would the other four missions. San Antonio's first real growth is often tied to a group of Canary Islanders who established the first civilian settlement and municipal government in the early 1730s. Over the next century, the area would become known by other namesakes such as Villa de San Fernando and San Fernando de Bexar. In 1836, at the historic battle of the Alamo, San Fernando de Bexar was caught in the middle of Texas' fierce fight for independence from

Mexico. A year later, the new Republic of Texas organized Bexar County and San Antonio was formally incorporated as its seat of government.

**1831**  
**City is formally  
incorporated**

**1952**  
**Council-Manager  
government installed**

**1911**  
**Council elected  
by district**

Following incorporation, a mayor-alderman form of government was established as the city's first administrative and legislative body, with each alderman representing one section of the city. Town council meetings were held in English and Spanish. Aldermen were replaced in 1915 with commissioners who were elected at-large. Voters adopted yet another City Charter in 1951 that replaced commissioners with a council-manager form of government, which is still used today.

City Council representatives were elected at-large until voters amended the charter in 1977 to elect members based on geographic districts, while the mayor is elected at-large. The most recent revision of the charter occurred in 1991 when voters elected to limit the mayor and council representatives to two, two-year terms of office.



## THE CITY ORGANIZATION: HOW IT WORKS

The council-manager form of government is the most popular structure of government organization in the United States. Utilizing this form of administration, San Antonio voters elect 11 representatives (10 district representatives and a mayor) to pass laws and establish policies for the city. Each representative is paid \$20 per meeting attended, while the Mayor is paid \$50 per meeting attended.

The Mayor and City Council are the community's key decision makers. They focus on: the provision and efficiency of basic services; their district's growth; capital improvement projects; land use and development; the city's financial growth and economic development; and other important issues. Council members focus on how City policies not only meet the needs of their constituents, but also how they meet the goals of the entire community.

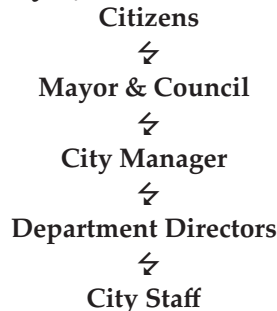
The Council hires a City Manager to serve as the City's chief administrator. The City Manager is responsible for

carrying out the actions and policies of the council by overseeing the day-to-day operation of the organization. Council members also rely on the city manager to provide them with professional advice before they take action on a specific issue.

Today, San Antonio's City Manager oversees more than 12,000 employees in 38 departments who provide a wide range of municipal services. For example, City employees fight crime, put out fires, collect wastes, maintain streets, issue building permits, help senior citizens, provide recreation and cultural activities, and provide hundreds of other important services. The City Manager relies on department directors to ensure that these services are provided in an effective and efficient manner. The Manager also is

charged with developing and overseeing an annual budget, which is approved by City Council each year, that pays for all of services the City provides to its customers.

*Council-Manager  
Organizational Structure*



### THE CITY SEAL

This seal is the official emblem of the City of San Antonio. It was designed in 1925 by Johannes C. Scholze, a resident of San Antonio. Scholze created a wood carving that includes an Alamo at the top, the Lone Star of Texas, and the words "Libertatis Cunabulae" which is Latin for "Cradle of Liberty." However, the emblem was not designated as the City's Official Seal until 1981. At that time, City Council approved it to be used to identify the City on all official documents and papers and it is still used for that purpose today.

## THE BUDGET: A \$1 BILLION CHALLENGE

Today, the City of San Antonio provides more than \$1 billion in services. The three primary funding sources for these services are: a share of City Public Service (CPS) revenues that citizens pay for through utility bills; a share of local sales tax receipts; and property taxes. These three sources make up more than three-fourths of the City's General Fund, a fund that supports the majority of basic municipal services like police and fire protection, street repairs and park maintenance, to name a few. Municipal court fines, licenses and permit charges and other fees make up the rest of the General Fund resources.

At the current tax rate, roughly 58 cents for every \$100 of the appraised value of your property supports basic services provided by the General Fund. However, the General Fund also is a product of the local environment. CPS revenue may vary because of weather conditions or fuel prices while sales tax revenue may vary based on the state of the local economy. Therefore, a shortfall may result. The City Charter requires a balanced budget when the budget is adopted for the next fiscal year. Therefore, certain services may have to be cut or reduced to offset the cost of higher priority services.

Many City services also are supported by Enterprise Funds or Special Revenue Funds. For example, garbage, recyclables and brush collection and similar services are supported by the Environmental Services Fund that collects revenues through user fees included on your utility bill. A Community & Visitor Facilities Special Revenue Fund utilizes Hotel/Motel Occupancy Taxes, facility rentals, and concessions revenues to support the Convention Bureau, convention facilities, arts agencies and other convention/tourist-related activities.

The City's fiscal year begins October 1. However, the City Council and City management begin in early summer to forecast projected revenues and determine service priorities for that year. In August, the City Manager proposes a comprehensive budget of services for the upcoming year. By the third week in September, that budget is adopted by city council following a series of council worksessions and public hearings that seek community input on budget issues.

*The  
General Fund*  
**CPS revenues,  
sales taxes and  
property taxes**  
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## CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

**C**ity Council meets each Thursday beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Chamber on the first floor of the Municipal Plaza Building located at Main and Commerce streets. City Council normally meets weekly. However, no meetings are scheduled on the fourth Thursday of each month in order to provide councilmembers the opportunity to have scheduling flexibility for district and constituent obligations or other commitments requiring their attendance. Still other meetings may be postponed due to holidays, special events, or to allow staff to devote time to issues such as producing the City's annual budget. On occasion, the Council may be called in to a special meeting by the City Clerk upon written request of the Mayor, City Manager or three members of the City Council. The Council also may meet at locations other than City Hall for specific public hearings and for informal work sessions. Councilmembers also may meet each Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. for "B" Session, an informal worksession used for detailed staff presentations or briefings. No formal action is taken during these sessions.

Meetings of the City Council -- regular, special or informal -- are open to the public, except for executive sessions which may be closed to the public, by state law, for consultation concerning attorney-client matters, real estate, economic development matters, litigation, contracts, personnel or security matters. The City Council must be in open session in order to take formal action on any matter and to pass ordinances. *Ordinances* are municipal laws approved by the City Council to maintain the health, safety and welfare of citizens. The Council also may consider *resolutions*, which are statements of policy or support for a specific issue but may not require fiscal or staff resources. Six affirmative votes of the council are needed to approve or disapprove any council action.

## HOW A MEETING IS CONDUCTED

A typical City Council meeting begins with the calling of the roll by the City Clerk to ensure that a quorum (at least six members) is present. The Mayor then calls the meeting to order. Following an invocation and stating of the Pledge of Allegiance, City Council begins the official business of the meeting by considering **Consent Agenda Items**. Consent items include routine items such as the purchase of equipment and supplies; capital improvements; or other similar items. Council members may pull certain consent items for individual discussion or staff presentation. Consent items are adopted as a group by one single vote. Upon adoption of the Consent agenda items, the Council considers agenda items that require an individual vote, including time-certain items. **Items for Individual Consideration** usually merit a detailed staff presentation and Council discussion prior to adoption. During the meeting, Time-Certain Items, including public hearings may be called and considered at their posted times or as soon as possible thereafter.

At any time during the meeting, the City Council may recess into Executive Session.

Upon returning from a lunch break, the Council will continue to consider agenda items not completed during the morning period.

**Ceremonial Items** begin at a time scheduled by the City Manager and City Clerk. This is usually between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. depending on the number of items to be presented. At 6:00 p.m. or soon after the

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## APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL

There are several ways for citizens to address the City Council during regular meetings. Citizens must sign rosters available outside the Council Chamber beginning one hour prior to a meeting to speak to the Council on agenda items as follows:

**Individual Consideration and Consent items:** Citizens must sign the appropriate sign-in sheet for these items prior to 9:00 a.m.



Each citizen will have three minutes to speak on one or multiple agenda items.

**Time-Certain items and public hearings:** Citizens must sign the appropriate sign-in sheet for a time-certain item prior to its posted time of consideration.

Citizens will be given three minutes to speak.

**Citizens to be Heard:**

Citizens wishing to speak on issues not related to items posted on the agenda should sign the Citizens to be Heard roster prior to 6:00 p.m. Citizens will be given three minutes to speak.

Groups of citizens from the same organization are asked to share nine minutes to address the council on certain items.

Written testimony in support of or in opposition to an agenda item may be submitted to the City Council in lieu of verbal testimony. Written testimony must be submitted by appropriate registration deadlines. Testimony forms are available in the Office of the City Clerk and at the registration desk on the day of a Council meeting.

## THE AGENDA

An agenda for a regular or special City Council meeting must, by state law, be posted at least 72 continuous hours prior to the beginning of that particular meeting. The lone exception involves matters of an emergency nature, which may be posted for Council consideration at least two hours prior to that consideration.

For the convenience of all citizens, copies of agendas for City Council meetings are posted on the first-floor bulletin board at City Hall and in the kiosk on the west side grounds of City Hall. The agenda also is posted on the Internet at [www.sanantonio.gov](http://www.sanantonio.gov). Copies of agendas for a City Council meeting are available outside the doors to the Council Chamber one hour prior to a regular meeting.

## GETTING INVOLVED

Many citizens of San Antonio are dedicated to improving their community by participating in their government. At any one time, more than 600 volunteers may serve their municipal government on over 50 City boards and commissions. These boards and commissions advise City Council on issues such as parks and open space, convention and tourism, zoning, elderly affairs and more. Members of these boards are appointed by the City Council and may be appointed as a district representative or to an at-large position.

Citizens who are interested in participating on a City board or commission should contact their Council member or the Office of the City Clerk for more information. Applications are available in the Office of the City Clerk on the second floor of City Hall, 100 Military Plaza, or on the City's website at [www.sanantonio.gov/clerk](http://www.sanantonio.gov/clerk).

## THE CITY FLAG

The City of San Antonio's official flag was designed in 1935 by William Herring, deputy commander of the Texas Department of United War Veterans. Herring designed the flag for the national convention of the United Spanish War Veterans being held in San Antonio that year. The original design featured the Alamo superimposed in the center of a white Lone Star of Texas. The Lone Star shined from a field of one-half blue, representing loyalty, and one-half crimson red, which represents the blood that courses through the veins of every loyal Texan. Originally, the words "San Antonio" and "Texas" were printed across the top and bottom of the flag.

City commissioners unofficially adopted the flag in 1935 and two copies were made, one for City Hall and the other for the Chamber of Commerce. However, no action was taken to formally adopt the flag's design until 1976. In 1992, the City was informed that it was no longer acceptable to have words on a flag. City Council passed a resolution to alter the flag's design to the more practical design that is used today.



## MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL OFFICES

Mayor	Phil Hardberger	207-7060
City Council Offices		207-7040
District 1	Roger Flores	207-7279
District 2	Sheila McNeil	207-7278
District 3	Roland Gutierrez	207-7064
District 4	Richard Perez	207-7281
District 5	Patti Radle	207-7043
District 6	Delicia Herrera	207-7065
District 7	Elena Guajardo	207-7044
District 8	Art Hall	207-7086
District 9	Kevin Wolff	207-7325
District 10	Christopher "Chip" Haass	207-7276
City Manager	Sheryl L. Sculley	207-7080



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completion of Ceremonial items, Council will begin hearing citizen input at the Citizens to be Heard portion of the agenda.

If the agenda is not completed by 7:00 p.m., the Mayor or presiding officer will entertain a motion to continue the meeting, postpone remaining items to the next council meeting date, or recess and reconvene the meeting at a specified time on the following day.

*This brochure is published by the Office of the City Clerk and the Department of Communications and Public Affairs of the City of San Antonio. If you would like to request additional copies of this brochure or request a tour of City Hall and other facilities, call 207-7253.*



Watch full coverage of City Council meetings each Thursday live on TVSA, cable channel 21. Meetings are rebroadcast on TVSA the following Saturday and Sunday beginning at 9:00 a.m.